AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (**Previously Presented**) A genetically altered mouse deficient in functional Caspase-9 expression due to a defective Caspase-9 gene, wherein a homozygous mutation in said defective Caspase-9 gene causes reduced apoptosis in brain, spinal cord, dexamethasone-treated thymocytes, cardiac muscle, or smooth muscle, or reduced apoptosis associated with viral infection.

2. (**Canceled**)

3. (**Previously Presented**) A method of producing a genetically altered mouse deficient in functional Caspase-9 expression due to a defective Caspase-9 gene, wherein a homozygous mutation in said defective Caspase-9 gene causes reduced apoptosis in brain, spinal cord, dexamethasone-treated thymocytes, cardiac muscle, or smooth muscle, or reduced apoptosis associated with viral infection, the method comprising the steps of:

   a. providing an isolated DNA sequence comprising a genomic DNA sequence encoding a mouse Caspase-9 that is defective in that it does not contain the pentapeptide motif QACXG (SEQ ID NO: 7), wherein "X" is arginine or glycine;

   b. introducing said isolated DNA sequence into a mouse embryonic stem cell under conditions that cause genomic DNA sequence to stably integrate, via homologous recombination, into a chromosome of said stem cell;

   c. incorporating said stem cell into a mouse blastocyst to produce a chimeric mouse;

   d. breeding said chimeric mouse to produce mice heterozygous for said genomic DNA sequence encoding said defective Caspase-9, thereby producing a genetically altered mouse defective in Caspase-9 expression.

4. (**Previously Presented**) The method according to claim 3, wherein said isolated DNA sequence additionally comprises a selectable marker gene.

5. (**Original**) The method according to claim 4, wherein said marker gene is a neo gene.

6-7. (**Canceled**)

8. (**Previously Presented**) The genetically altered mouse according to claim 1, wherein said mouse is heterozygous for the defective Caspase-9 gene.

9. (**Previously Presented**) The genetically altered mouse according to claim 1, wherein said mouse is homozygous for the defective Caspase-9 gene.

10. (**Previously Presented**) A genetically altered mouse deficient in functional Caspase-9 expression due to a defective Caspase-9 gene, wherein said defective Caspase-9 gene comprises a DNA sequence encoding a Caspase-9 protein that does not contain the pentapeptide motif QACXG (SEQ ID NO: 7), and wherein a homozygous mutation in said defective Caspase-9 gene causes reduced apoptosis in brain, spinal cord, dexamethasone-treated thymocytes, cardiac muscle, or smooth muscle, or reduced apoptosis associated with viral infection.

11. (**Previously Presented**) The method of claim 3, further comprising:

    e. interbreeding said mice heterozygous for the genomic DNA sequence encoding the defective Caspase-9 to produce homozygous mice deficient in functional Caspase-9 expression.